

CHAPTER - III

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Anand's Lalu Trilogy- The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940) and The Sword and the Sickle (1942) portrays the tragedy of Indian peasant youth called Lal Singh. Being a rebel, Lal Singh denies the rigid religion and tradition. The impending danger on his personal life and the corrupt influence of village economy force him to join army. His experiences in the war make him juxtapose his life with that of the Europeans. Finally, he tries to reconstruct the life according to his abilities. He fails in his attempt. The Trilogy is linked together by central character, Lal Singh. This adolescent boy confronts the problems of growing into maturity. Lal Singh is about seventeen as The Village opens and about twenty-four as The Sword and the Sickle ends.

Lalu participates in various episodes alongwith his adolescent companions: Churanjee, Ghulam, Gughri, Amar Singh and Maya. But again Lalu is centre of action. Most of the things happen to him and he reacts to these situations. Anand introduces Nihal's son, Lal Singh in The Village in these words :

Lalu, with a mischievous boyish smile on his ruddy, handsome face, which was almost a replica of the face with which the old man (his father) had confronted the world when he was young.¹

This means that Lalu resembles his father in appearance. Lalu's frame, his well rounded limbs and the general air of well being impressed the people. Lalu works with concentration on his ancestral land. Lalu is the last son of Nihal Singh and Gujri. Sharm Singh and religious Dayal Singh are his brothers. As compared to Munoo and Bakha, Lalu's family offers him better domestic security. He lives in his joint sikh family. But all is not well in his case. His family is the victim of the village economy. The landlord, the money-lender, the Mahant, the police, the age-old karma are party to the destruction of his family's happiness. Thank to God, Lalu is not illiterate person. He understands the tragic plight of his family. But before this, his innocence has to undergo the severe tests. He questions and requestions the ways of his family, the behaviour of his villagers. Marlene Fisher remarks about Lalu's confusion.

Torn between his affection for these old people, he had known all his life and his straining impatience at their ways, Lalu was in constant state of tension, varying from sympathy to resentment, from caring to disgust.²

Lalu's education helps him in comprehending the world around him. Permila Paul comments,

Lal Singh's education has given him a spirit of non-confirmity which actually provokes hostility in the elders. The fact that education has given him an ability to express himself well through English and developed a love for machines has conferred on him a distinction that is not valued by the community at large.³

The narrator narrates Lalu's early education,

Hukum Chand (the teacher) had a vendatta against Lalu because Nihalu had refused to give him a sack of wheat every harvest, and because Lalu had refused to bear with master's grain to the flour mill of Sherkot to have it ground. In those days, life had begun every morning with five stripes of the cane on his palms.⁴

Lalu introduces himself to Mr. Long :

"I was educated up to the eighth class at the church mission high school at Sherkot, I was in the boy scout's rally which you inspected three years ago."⁵

Long appoints him the leader of the boy scouts. Because of his education, he speaks in English with the British characters.

The natural alley of this education is his love for modern life. Lalu aspires for modern life. He explains the advantages of train to his father,

" I wouldn't mind being a driver and going to Delhi and Bombay with it.(train), And whatever you say, Bapu, you know you would not like to be carrying all those sacks of grain to Manabad and Sherkot on your back. The bullock Cart drivers stop twenty times, to smoke and to feed the bullocks, and they often get drunk and take two days and a night sometimes. But you can send anything to town in an hour by the goods train."⁶

He expects long boots, like American farmers. To wear one set of clothes for work and another set during leisure hours is his dream. The narrator reflects about his aspirations,

He (Lalu) would have to wait till he could make the land pay, and he could afford to have a few Angrezi things for wearing on his holidays in the town. And cigarettes. And a revolver.⁷

He wants to rebuild his village with the bricks. Lalu speaks in fluent English. This is nothing but his adherence to modernity. He enjoys freedom from the traditional rituals of the village life. In town he eats in Muslaman's shop and does his hair-cut. This presents him as the strong supporter of modern life.

Like Bakha and Munoo, Lalu is also a victim of social and political forces. But, Lalu is not a passive being. Things happen to him. He tries to react to these events, in his personal way. P.K. Rajan rightly points out,

Lalu of The Village is up against a society of evils, a society of cliches, rituals and superstitions.⁸

Lalu shows his uncompromising opposition to the exploitative society. He is a rebel. He revolts against the rituals of religion. His strong condemnation of Sikh rituals is explicit in the remark ,

" I will have this forest of tangled overgrowth cut if I get to the town for the fair....As to this religion, its only ritual... The Katch, Kara, Kirpan, Kesh and Kanga might well have been necessary when Guru Govind was fighting Aurungzeb. Then it was said, he enjoined his men to wear shorts because he couldn't get clothes, bangles and swords for

symbols, and long hair because he couldn't get barbers to shave them, and combs to tidy their hair. Such provisions were dictated by necessity and common sense. But as any one with a grain of intelligence said, what was the use of observing these conventions now that there was no further need for them."⁹

Finally, he does his hair-cut in town, for this he is forced to sit on a donkey with his blackened face. Even his family members beat and abuse him. This is the moment of awareness for Lalu. This leads him to isolation. This incident in the novel makes Lalu aware of his fight. He runs away from the tormenting crowd and tries to make out his position in these words,

" That I was born on this land... That my mother gave birth to me while she worked in the fields... That these are my fields... I wish I had never been born... I wish I had been born somewhere else, in some city, in some... in any place other than this village, Oh, I wish I had never been born here, if they had to treat me like that ... the abuse... The shouts... The insults and... Oh, how could they,... they blackened my face... They put me... All of them my own people... Oh, how could they... my own father and mother ... they used to pet me and love me... my own brothers... that rogue, Hardit Singh... and my own mother, who never slept for nights... Oh... disgraced forever... beaten and bruised..."¹⁰

This angry outburst is against family, the tradition and the ritualistic religion. But this is not only an adolescent's anger. The writer speaks through this adolescent character. Anand told P.K. Rajan,

Even the Sikh faith has become ritual. The subjection of my hero to utter humiliation was to me the abnegation of all human sense. Therefore, my revolt against the main faiths of India is a revolt against the cliché, the claptrap of ritual.¹¹

Lalu dislikes the ways of Mahant Nandgir. He dislikes the business of quacks in town. He hates his family because they want to spend more money on ritual like his elder brother's marriage. He attacks and counter-attacks these traditional forces. He understands that the landlord, the Sahukar, the police and villager's firm faith in Karma are party to each other in the destruction of the village economy. But his adolescent love-affair with Maya, his deep love for modern life, his sense of folk poetry in him, verbal abuse of all the traditional forces are not enough to fight out the dehumanized systems. He runs away from his village. The son of a soil becomes Recruit No. 12444 to 2 platoon, B Company in the 68th Rifles. He thinks that his position as a soldier will solve his problems. In the end of the novel, he loses his father and prepares himself for the experience with the big war machine.

Generally, adolescents idealize some hero. Lalu praises Zhandu for his bravery against police. Anand's personal adolescence also contributes to the development of this central character. G.S. Balaram Gupta says,

The hero speaks for Anand when he talks of replacing the dirty, foul smelling village with its crumbling hovels by a well built town.¹²

Marlene Fisher gives her opinion based on her conversation with Anand. She says,

The Village does draw upon Mulk's early life in Punjab. The hair-cutting scene, is based upon what actually happened to a young uncle of Mulk's and much about Lalu, his warmth and intelligence, his impatience, rebelliousness and independence of mind is based upon the character and personality of young mulk Raj Anand.¹³

Like Bakha and Munoo, Lalu receives a series of abusive words like, ' son of bitch ', ' illegally begotten ', ' swine ', ' the rougue ', ' the spoiler of our religion ', ' the dog ', through the course of action.

In a closed village life, Lalu tries to follow his love-affair with Maya. Maya is a fair-complexioned girl of fourteen. Being an adolescent girl, she has no permission to walk about in the village. She meets Lalu on her way to fair in town. Lalu feels her slender body in cart. He plays cards with her. Lalu memorises Waris Shah's Hir-Ranjah. Maya comes to his hours. Both of them begin their play. The narrator comments,

Maya fell upon him, with a lovely helplessness, beating him, scratching him, digging her fists into his sides as he laughed and shook from side to side to ward her off.¹⁴

But this love-scene is a kind of dream and illusion for them. Maya's father tries to arrest Lalu for this act under different pretext. After this incident, Lalu runs away from village.

Lalu comes to know about the causes of the destruction of his family. He is against all the evil and traditional forces. He tries to react to each situation according to his capacities. His rebellion is his personal answer to the forces of society. He leaves his village with these words,

" I won't in this cursed village....."¹⁵

and reaches Manabad and joins army with this reflection,

" If I become the soldier in the army, I would become an employee of the Sarkar and the police couldn't lay hands on me. And the money, I could earn in the army may help to pay off our dabts."¹⁶

Krishan Nandan Sinha rightly remarks,

The Village registers with full force the collision between the adolescent and the adult world. Its basic theme is the helplessness of its hero, half-child, half-adult, in a predominantly callous world.¹⁷

Across the black waters (1940) is a second novel in Trilogy which narrates the adventures and experiences of village adolescent- Lal Singh. Anand is proud of this work. He told Rajan,

Which Indian novelist has written a novel on the war? I am the only one who did it. It recollects the horrors of war. I have written about the people who had to go away to a far off land, on fifteen rupees a month, to fight for cause they did not know anything about... I have five years of my life writing this novel.¹⁸

Saros Cowasjee comments,

The novel is based on Anand's own knowledge of trench warfare in Spain, and on what he came to know about those who fought in Flanders during world war I.¹⁹

Lalu, the individual, becomes impersonal figures, Recruit No. 12444 to 2 Platoon, B Company in the 68th Rifles. He joins the war in this capacity. He is curious to know Europe. Like other soldiers, he is ignorant about the why and how of the war. But the war is the biggest educative experience of his life. He compares and contrasts his Indian village with European villages.

The army marches from one place to another—Marseilles, Orleans, Calais, Festubert and so on. Lalu's friends like uncle Kirpu, Daddy Dhanno, Havildar Lachman Singh are participants in this war. They have their traditional religious faiths. Lalu mocks at their faiths and Gods with newly acquired knowledge in France. Lalu questions God and considers him fool. The atmosphere of freedom paves the way for his criticism of Indian customs and superstitions. He tells uncle Kirpu,

" Our elders say it is not the custom to do this, it is not the custom to do that. Fools, if you are seen drinking a pot of wine, you are automatically declared a drunkard, and if you look at a woman, you at once become notorious as a rogue, a pimp and a whoremonger and your parents tell you that you have cut their nose in the brotherhood and no one will give you his daughter in marriage. Burnt up people owls."20

This is Lalu's angry outburst against closed Indian society from a distance.

Like other soldiers, he is a mere particle in the big war machine. But still, he is at the centre of action. Things happen to him and he graduates himself into maturity. His encounter with life in Europe gives him new insight. In the beginning, he faints at the sight of blood. But in the course of action, he kills an enemy soldier with his rifle. He praises European life to Daddy Dhanoo in these words,

" But Owen Sahib told us on the route march that the peasants here is laborious, independent and a strong fighter... To be sure, they have a religion like ours and their women work hard and are honourable, except a few, and here, wine is drunk like water and no one is seen with his face in his drain at home... Yessuh Messih is their God."21

Lalu doesn't wish to condemn his village. But he wants to reform it with his education and experience. For this, he compares his native land to European lands. He does the keen observations of French farms. He expresses his whole-hearted appreciation of French farming in his letter to his mother,

This country is full of precious things, such as machine ploughs, steel implements, sheep pigs, cows, chickens, beet root, potatoes and apple wine. The Francis of Franceville and the Flamands of Flanders are wonderful cultivators. They plough five times as much land in a day with tractor machines as we do in ten days with a woden land scratcher. And they use manures full of medicines such as sarkar ought to invest in Hind. What a country. what a country. The house in which I live is like a palace and yet it belongs to a farmer... The reason why these people are happier is because they do not borrow money from money-linders, out from the Bank at very low interest. When I come back, I shall ask the Karnel Sahib to order the bania to give back our mortagages, and to get the landlord to return the lands he has seized from us as a reward for fighting in this war.²²

This letter is his adolescent enthusiasm about the reform of his family and the reform of his village lands. In the same letter, Lalu points out the importance of education. He wants his Cousin, Jitu to have the co-education like Francis children. The women also are more free in France. Lalu wants to transfer this modern French life to his village.

Lalu tries to satisfy his sexual instinct. He visits a brothel alongwith Subah. This group of soldiers received some kisses and watched the dance for big payment. He feels excitement in the company of these girls. He writes to his mother about his friendship with a French girl; About this Marie affair, the narator narrates,

The two looks seemed to become one look, and into this he (Lalu) wanted to put a meaning, so that he could linger and yearn to realise the promise of contact with her budding beauty.²³

Lalu learns his lessons from the deaths of his close friends like uncle Kirpu, Daddy Danoo, and Lachman Singh. Subah Singh and Lance Naik Loknath trouble him a lot. His experience in trenches makes him an able man for the action. Finally, German soldiers arrest him as a war prisoner. Throughout the novel, Lalu as a sensitive adolescent shares the experiences with other soldiers. He faces the hardships of the army life. Lalu criticises war,

He (Lalu) could not believe that ordinary men and women of good sense, and the government of France, England, and Germany, which were saner and wiser than the ordinary people over whom they ruled, could be engaged in a war in which men were being wounded and houses shattered.²⁴

This is Anand's criticism of war through character. Lalu idealises Mr. Owen as his military hero. In the trenches, he observes various nightmares expressing his adolescent fear of the war. Lalu is optimistic about life. The war is the dividing line between his old self and the new self. His submission to each new experience is assertion of his personality. He continues with his love for land, love for modern life, love for companions, urge to live, wish to reform his village. Let us see what Lalu makes out of his war experiences in the third and last novel of Trilogy. Punjab Government banned these two novels because they criticised the holy sikh religion. Anand wrote to Cowasjee,

You will be amused to know that the Punjab Government has banned Across the Black Waters just now, after the previous ban on The Village last year.²⁵

Saros Cowasjee introduces the novel, The Sword and the Sickle,

The Novel, two months before its publication was announced as All men are brothers in The Times Literary Supplement. George Orwell suggested the present title.²⁶

Lalu returns from the German prison. He wants to impelment his plans. But his dreams are shattered. He hopes that the Government will give rewards. He introduces himself to the passengers in a train.

"I have no religion. Our caste, since I have been in vilayat for some years."²⁷

Lalu wants to start a farm in Vilayati style. But contrary to his expectations, Lalu faces demobilization from the army. At Manabad, Goghi tells him the counterpart of his family's tragedy,

"Dayal Singh (Lalu's brother) turned mystic Sadhu and went away to Beas Guru. The land was auctioned at the instance of that Chamuna and bought by Harbanssingh. Kesari put on a Chaddar with a copoersmith."²⁸

His mother is no more. Thus, he is deprived of all the domestic pleasures.

He tries to apply himself to the changed situation. He senses a change in people. He comprehends the effects of war on Indian masses. Now, he isn't a mere sensitive adolescent reacting in his verbal outbursts. He prepares himself for a political action. He attends the meeting of the peasants alongwith uncle Harnam Singh, Gughri and Varma Sahib. Lalu understands the significance of war. He tells people,

" Now what were we fighting for ? ... To make the world safe for Sarkar, and so that the rich Sahibs may enjoy the pleasures of girls and good food and wine."29

After this, the peasants marched with the slogan,

Down with the Sarkar.³⁰

Lalu wants to organize these peasants. His first love, Maya, now widow, comes to him. He made love to her. This shows his sexual maturity. Henceforth, Lalu's life tries to connect two poles- his love for Maya and his love for political action. With the help of his friends, Lalu elopes with Maya. Professor Verma takes this couple to count Rampal Singh at Rajgarh.

Count Rampal Singh is a landlord. He fights for the peasants. Lalu becomes a sort of paid companion to him. Count's comrades Ram Din, Nandu, Gupta, Pandit Ramkumar Misra and Lalu work for the peasants. They issue the paper. They



organize the meeting of the peasants. They fight against landlordism. Lalu understands that poverty, debt, rent, eviction, are the major hindrances to the peasants. He is bold in criticizing the Govt. policies. The group arranges Lalu's marriage. They try to take the procession of Chandra's dead body, (he dies of overwork by the landlord) to Allahabad. But they fail. They try to connect their work with the National Congress. They meet Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi. They try to establish communal farm. They are extremists. But their actions are based on violence. Verma isolates himself from this group. The Marxists like Sarshar, Razwi blame this group for their actions. Finally, most of them are in jail. Lalu faces the imprisonment. In jail, he reflects upon his actions and rigorous activities after his return to India. He now understands the meaning of revolution. He talks to himself,

" Revolution is a need of togetherness... the need for to stand together as brothers..."³¹

He gets the message of his wife's pregnancy. Perhaps, this would be child will work for the completion of Lalu's dreams. Lalu's actions are varied and many because he is an adolescent in a typical hystorical phase of the country. The ideological bewilderment forces Lalu to act for different groups. He

stands for masses. Finally, he fails in his revolution. But he achieves maturity. In the end of the novel, his journey from adolescence to adulthood is complete. He asserts his identity with the poor. His life is a part of historical Indian freedom movement. His education, his war experiences bring him straight on the streets for the demands of the poor masses.

His love affair with Maya presents him as a sexually mature person. But their relationship is love-hate relationship. Being a traditional Indian woman, Maya isn't happy only with her elopement. She insists on marrying Lalu. She wants the official status as his wife. The critics like G.S. Balaram Gupta and M.K. Naik blame Anand for the Lalu-Maya love affair. But her character helps Lalu in growing. The narrator says,

He (Lalu) had been impatient with her because he had seen in her (Maya) many of his own impulses to flourish of his adolescence, his own weaknesses, his own confusions, vanities and vapidities.³²

Cowasjee correctly asserts,

Anand uses Lalu as a sounding board to test the various revolutionary approaches to the Indian problem. And through Lalu's confusion, he reveals the confusion of the average Indian forced to deal with half a dozen irreconcilable revolutionary creeds.³³

Maya lives for Lalu and Lalu lives for revolution. Lalu's growth in manhood is possible because of Maya's spirit of modernity is remarkable. She willingly gives up the comforts in her parental house for love. Lalu belongs to the national struggle. His failure is not an absolute failure.

Anand admits,

In the hero's recognition of his failure lies his success. He senses the poetry of revolt. And the giant and the revolutionary become one in the search of a freedom.³⁴

Like other adolescents Lalu loves poetry. He sings with the peasants. His attraction for revolutionary ways is his attraction for modern life and also his attempt to assert his personality. The social forces shape his personality as a rebel against the British Government. He raises his banner of protest against all the tools of exploitation. The action takes place on epic scale. The series of speeches and orations on the evils of Landlordism, on British imperialism, on communism and Gandhism are Anand's personal remarks through his character. Here, Lalu works as a mouthpiece of the writer. Lalu is an authentic voice. Maya is also an adolescent girl. But Anand has not done full justice to this girl. Her evolution is not as complete as Lalu. She understands very little of Lalu's political actions. Perhaps, she is there to prove Anand's statement,

The female is matrix of love and warmth and passion.³⁵

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